

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 88

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM PFOR NZ XP

SUBJ: SOUTH PACIFIC NUCLEAR FREE ZONE (SPNFZ)

REF: WELLINGTON 2431, DTG 210420Z AUG 75

1. I CALLED ON FONSECY CORNER AUGUST 22 TO EXPRESS MY CONCERN OVER DISCREPANCY BETWEEN PM ROWLING'S PUBLIC STATEMENT REGARDING GNZ'S SPNFZ PROPOSAL (REFTEL) ON THE ONE HAND, AND PM'S STATEMENT TO PRESIDENT FORD ON MAY 7 AND CORNER'S LETTER TO ME OF JUNE 27 ON THE SUBJECT (WELLINGTON 1853) ON THE OTHER.

2. I REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO PM'S AUGUST 20 UNQUALIFIED STATEMENT THAT GNZ'S OBJECTIVE IS TO BAR MOVEMENT OF NUCLEAR ARMED VESSELS FROM THE ZONE, AND CONTRASTED THIS WITH ROWLING'S STATMENT TO PRESIDENT THAT "THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM WITH RESPECT TO MOVEMENT", AS WELL AS WITH DETAILED DESCRIPTION IN CORNER'S LETTER OF THE STAGES THROUGH WHICH GNZ ENVISAGED ITS PROPOSAL WOULD PROCEED. CORNER HAD WRITTEN THAT ONLY IN THE THIRD AND LAST STAGE OF THE PROCESS, WHICH "WOULD NOT BE REACHED FOR A LONG TIME, SINCE THIS WOULD DEPEND ON THE AGREEMENT OF ALL THE NUCLEAR POWERS. . .", WAS IT EXPECTED THAT APPLICATION OF

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THE PROPOSED TREATY WOULD BE EXTENDED TO THE HIGH SEAS.

3. CORNER RESPONDED BY EXPLAINING, AS HE HAS ON OTHER OCCASIONS, THAT HIS REFERENCE TO "HIGH SEAS" WAS MEANT TO APPLY TO IMPLANTATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON THE SEABED, NOT TO TRANSIT. I REJOINED THAT THE PM'S STATEMENT HAD NOT MADE SUCH A DIFFERENTIATION, AND URGED THAT CORNER REACH AN UNDERSTANDING ON THIS POINT WITH THE PM. CORNER AGREED TO DO SO.

4. I SAID I WAS CONCERNED OVER THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PM'S AUGUST 20 STATEMENT WHICH, IF LEFT STANDING, COULD BE INTERPRETED AS PART OF LABOUR'S ELECTORAL PLATFORM AND, SHOULD LABOUR BE RETURNED TO OFFICE IN NOVEMBER, COMMIT THE GNZ TO A POLICY WHICH WOULD ATTEMPT TO BAR USN VESSELS FROM THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

5. CORNER SAID HE TOO WAS CONCERNED OVER THE PM'S PUBLIC STATEMENT, AND THE QUESTION WAS HOW TO ARRANGE FOR THE PM TO SPEAK MORE PRECISELY REGARDING THE GNZ'S POLICY OBJECTIVES. THE PM HAD BEEN PROVIDED WITH A BRIEF ON THE SUBJECT WHICH UNFORTUNATELY HE HAD NOT STUCK TO, AND THE PROBLEM NOW WAS TO ARRANGE TO HAVE THE PM SPELL OUT WHAT IS ENVISAGED. ACCORDING TO CORNER, AN EARLY OCCASION WOULD BE SOUGHT FOR THE PM TO MAKE A FORMAL STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT. CORNER ASSURED ME THAT THE GNZ POSITION HAD NOT CHANGED FROM THAT CONVEYED TO ME IN HIS JUNE 27 LETTER AND REITERATED THAT THE PROBLEM WAS TO STRAIGHTEN OUT THE PUBLIC RECORD. I URGED THAT THIS BE DONE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. CORNER SAID HE WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO GET THE PM TO CLARIFY PUBLICLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY INVOLVES THREE STAGES AND THAT NO STAGE WOULD AFFECT TRANSIT OF THE HIGH SEAS.

6. I ASKED CORNER WHAT EFFECT THE PM'S STATEMENT HAD WITH REGARD TO THE QUESTION OF NPW VISITS WHICH PM HAD INDICATED WOULD REMAIN UNDER STUDY UNTIL AFTER THIS YEAR'S ELECTIONS. CORNER SAID NONE, BUT THEN SHOWED ME A PAPER HE HAD SENT THE PM REGARDING PROPOSED BRITISH NUCLEAR LIABILITY LEGISLATION SIMILAR TO OUR OWN. THE PM HAD NOTED ON THE PAPER "SEE ME ABOUT THIS". CORNER SAID
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PERHAPS HIS DISCUSSION WITH THE PM WOULD PROVIDE A DEFINITIVE ANSWER TO MY QUESTION.

7. COMMENT. IT IS APPARENT TO ME THAT THERE IS A DISPARITY BETWEEN POSITION CORNER TAKES REGARDING GNZ POLICY ON SPNFZ AND POSITION TAKEN BY ROWLING. IT ALSO APPEARS THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY STAFF OFFICERS MAY BE CLOSER TO PM'S THINKING THAN CORNER ON THIS SUBJECT. IN ANY EVENT,

CORNER HAS AGREED TO UNDERTAKE TO HAVE THE PM MAKE A CLARIFYING STATEMENT. I WOULD RECOMMEND, HOWEVER, THAT DEPARTMENT CALL IN AMBASSADOR WHITE AND RE-ENFORCE CONCERN I HAVE EXPRESSED OVER PM'S STATEMENT, SINCE IT DOES NOT COINCIDE WITH GNZ POLICY STATEMENT PROVIDED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND URGE THAT A CLARIFYING STATEMENT BE ISSUED AT EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY. BELIEVE DEPT SHOULD MAKE POINT OF SEEKING CLARIFICATION OF EXACTLY WHAT GNZ MEANS WHEN IT REFERS TO "HIGH SEAS". NZ OFFICIALS SEEM CONFUSED IN THEIR OWN MINDS AS TO WHAT "DEPLOYMENT", "IMPLANTATION", AND "TRANSIT" OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS MEAN, AND I EMPHASIZED TO CORNER THE CRITICALITY FOR THE US OF FREEDOM TO TRANSIT THE HIGH SEAS. SELDEN

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